

VZCZCXRO0361
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #3833/01 3421535
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 071535Z DEC 08
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0739
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003833

SIPDIS

USDOJ FOR DOUG ALLEN, JULIANA WU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/07/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KJUS](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: KARBALA SECURITY FORCES IN HUMAN RIGHTS SPOTLIGHT

REF: A. BAGHDAD 2861

[B](#). BAGHDAD 3549

[C](#). BAGHDAD 3431

[D](#). BAGHDAD 3806

Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor John Fox for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#). (C) Summary: Karbala's Iraqi Police (IP) commander has suspended from duty 134 personnel, including six senior officers, for alleged human-rights abuses. The local head of former Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari's Islah (Reform) Party has also claimed that police beat and verbally abused 12 party members who were arrested for illegally posting campaign handbills in downtown Karbala. An IP spokesman denied the charges and claimed the arrests were not politically motivated. End Summary.

Words to Deeds

[2](#). (C) In a speech on December 3 marking the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Karbala Governor Aqeel Mahmoud al-Khazali (Da'wa) announced that 134 police, including six senior officers, had been suspended from duty pending investigations into alleged human-rights abuses. (Note: Five Jaysh al-Mahdi members were acquitted on terrorism charges in October after it was determined that their confessions were acquired through torture; see ref A. End Note.) According to a senior police contact, the suspensions were ordered by the Karbala IP commander, BG Ali Mohammad Jassim, acting at the urging of provincial Iraqi Army (IA) commander BG Ali Musawi al-Ghireri. During a meeting with Senior Advisor Gray on November 3, Musawi -- who was imprisoned and tortured under Saddam Hussein -- stressed his commitment to safeguarding human rights (ref B).

[3](#). (C) When contacted by the PRT, Karbala IP spokesman Captain Ala'a Abbas declined to elaborate on the charges faced by the suspended personnel. However, the senior police contact said all were implicated in abuses of detainees under MG Ra'ad Shaker Jawdat al-Hasnawi, the former (2007-08) Karbala ISF (both IP and IA) commander. Ra'ad's iron-fisted crackdown on the Shi'a militias that ran rampant here pacified the province but prompted complaints that contributed to his ouster in October (ref C). Ra'ad, who led a rival Da'wa faction that challenged party-stalwart Aqeel's primacy here, is rumored to have been courted by former Prime Minister Jaafari to join Islah.

Deeds to Words

[4](#). (C) Also on December 3, the local Islah Party chairman, Dr. Ahmad Jamal, alleged that police beat and verbally abused 12 party members who were arrested on the evening of December 1 while posting campaign handbills in downtown Karbala (ref D). He claimed the men were held for six hours without charge. Implying that their detention was politically driven, Jamal said they were released only after

Jaafari complained to Aqeel. The senior police contact reports that Islah has threatened to file suit against the IP for human-rights violations.

15. (C) In response to Islah's claims, Captain Abbas said the 12 were arrested for campaign activities before the official start of the campaign on December 15. Moreover, he added, the men also violated the law by posting handbills on government facilities such as schools and clinics. According to Abbas, security considerations, not politics, underlay the arrests; he claimed the handbills called on citizens to commit violence. He continued that the 12 were released after being held for 30 minutes. He emphatically denied they had been abused. The senior police contact told the PRT that some officers had shouted imprecations at the men -- including insults aimed at Jaafari and his Sadrist allies -- including insults aimed at Jaafari and his Sadrist allies -- but that none had been assaulted physically.

Comment

16. (C) We are heartened that Musawi, via Jassim, is following through on his commitment to respect human rights. Their efforts will engender greater citizen trust in the security forces and help to strengthen respect for the rule of law in Karbala. However, politics likely did have a role in the arrest of the 12 Islah Party members, especially if the reports of Jaafari recruiting Ra'ad are correct. In any case, the handbills posted on December 1 do not incite violence (we have forwarded a photo of these to POL in Baghdad). Separating fact from fiction with regard to the provincial ISF -- which are widely regarded as loyal to

BAGHDAD 00003833 002 OF 002

Da'wa, if not necessarily to Aqeel -- will be key in assessing progress toward safeguarding human rights here.
End comment.
CROCKER